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AUTHOR	Seppanen, Loretta
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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to gather descriptive information on students enrolled in the state's community and technical colleges who have a bachelor's degree or higher. Findings included the following: (1) 10,340 out of the 148,000 students enrolled in fall 1993 possessed bachelor's degrees; (2) 44% cited upgrading and retraining as reasons for enrolling and 25% cited parent education; (3) 9% enrolled to prepare for further education at a university; (4) two-thirds of the degree holders were women; (5) the median age was 36, compared to the college median age of 27; (6) 50% were employed full-time, 24% were employed part-time, and 11% were seeking work; (7) degree holders showed a lower unemployment rate than typical students, and a full-time employment rate double that of typical students; (8) the majority of bachelor's degree holders were parents with dependent children, compared to one-third of all students; (9) excluding the degree holders who were enrolled in parent education programs, about one-third of the bachelor's degree holders were parents; (10) 86% were white; and (11) the colleges enrolling the highest percentage of degree holding students were North Seattle Community College, with 16.9% of enrolled students having bachelor's degrees or higher in fall 1993, Bellevue Community College at 14.6%, and Seattle Central at 12.9%. (KP)

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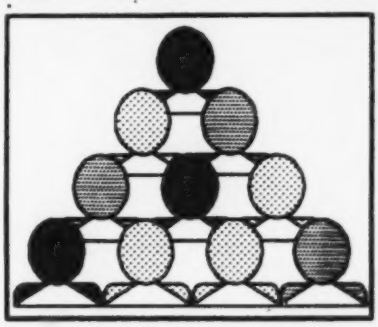

Research Report
No. 94-4

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Division of Enrollment Planning and Information Services

BACHELOR'S DEGREE HOLDERS ENROLLED IN WASHINGTON COMMUNITY COLLEGES

January 1994

Community and technical college provides an opportunity for continuing training for many adults in Washington, including some who have completed the bachelor's degree. This report, based on data in the State Board for Community and Technical College's management information system, provides descriptive information on the 10,000 students with bachelor's degrees who enroll at the colleges.

Summary of Findings

- About nine percent of students in all courses and seven percent of students in state supported courses possessed the bachelor's degree when they first enrolled at the community college. The enrollment of students with bachelor's degrees has remained fairly constant over the past three years.
- About 57 percent of the state supported FTE of those with bachelor's degree was taken for job related purposes.
- Half of the BA holders enrolled had been out of college for 14 or more years when they first returned to a community college.
- North Seattle Community College served the highest percentage of BA holders at 17 percent and Spokane Community College and Grays Harbor College served the lowest percentage at less than two percent.

For More Information Contact:
Loretta Seppanen, Manager, Research & Analysis
Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
P O Box 42495
Olympia WA 98504-2495
SCAN 234-3685

Are the number of bachelor's degree holders enrolled at the college increasing?

About 10,000 students out of the 148,000 enrolled in state supported courses in fall 1993 already possessed the bachelor's degree. Data show the number with the BA degree has remained fairly constant despite overall enrollment growth (see Table I). Growth of BA degree enrollments has likely been limited due to courses being filled first by full-time students.

Table I
Estimated Students with BA Degree
State Supported Courses

	Students	% Of Total
Fall 1990	9,030	6.7%
Fall 1991	10,580	7.2%
Fall 1992	10,333	7.0%
Fall 1993	10,340	7.0%

Source: Data Express SR93-42XX.
Note: Estimates are used to adjust for those not reporting prior education.

Why do those with bachelor's degrees enroll at the college?

Colleges provide an opportunity for job specific training for those who did not gain training in their desired field as part of the bachelor's degree. College also allows those who are employed in their desired field the opportunity to continue their education. About 44 percent of the BA holders enrolled for those purposes in fall 1992. Because students preparing for job changes often enroll full-time, those enrolled for upgrading and retraining purposes account for the majority of the state supported FTE as shown in Table II

Table II
State FTEs by Purpose for Attending
BA Holders, Fall 1992

Purpose for Attending	Headcount	% of Total	FTE	% of Total
Upgrading and Retraining	4,500	44%	2,189	57%
Prepare for Further University Training	930	9%	525	14%
Parent Education	2,585	25%	471	12%
Not Reported, Other	2,265	22%	642	17%
Total	10,330		3,826	

The Parent Education program which accounts for 25 percent of the headcount is designed to provide parents with skills needed to foster the growth of their pre-school children. Since these students take only a two credit course each quarter, they accounted for just twelve percent of the total FTE taken by BA holders.

Nine percent of the students were enrolled to prepare for further education at a university (examples would be students taking courses necessary for graduate school or to get teaching credential). Twenty-two percent of BA holders had not specified a purpose for attending or were enrolled for personal enrichment.

What are the characteristics of enrolled BA holders?

Two-thirds of BA holders enrolled in the community colleges were women. The high rate of female enrollment is partially explained by the predominance of women in the parent education program. Excluding those enrolled in parent eduction, 54 percent of the other BA holders were female. By contrast, the majority of BA holders in the Washington population, as in other states, are men, reflecting the historical predominance of men in four-year colleges prior to the 1980s. Thus the community college participation rate of female BA holders is larger than for males regardless of whether the parent education population is included or excluded from the analysis.

Given that they have already completed a degree, it is not surprising that the BA holders enrolled in college were on average older than the typical students, with a median age of 36 compared to the community college median age of 27. This high median age suggests that few BA holders came straight from their four-year institution. Most had been out of college for some years. In fact half the BA holders enrolled had likely completed their degrees fourteen or more years ago. These working adults appear to have enrolled to upgrade skills to be competitive in the current workforce.

Excluding those enrolled in the parent education program, 50 percent of the BA holders were employed full-time, 24 percent part-time, and 11 percent were seeking work. These figures represent a lower unemployment rate for the BA holders than for the typical student and a full-time work rate double the rate for other students. These characteristics suggest that about half those enrolled with the BA have a strong commitment to employment and are using education as a way of maintaining skills needed for their jobs.

The majority of BA holders were parents with dependent children compared to a third of all students. Excluding the parent education enrollees, who by the nature of the course taken are parents, about one third of all other BA holders were parents as well as being students.

Most of the BA holders enrolled (86 percent) were white, reflecting the disproportionally white population among those with four-year degrees in Washington.

Do colleges attract BA holders in equal numbers?

While most colleges enrolled between six and eight percent BA holders, several colleges vary from that norm as shown in Table III. Specifically North Seattle enrolled 17 percent BA holders consistent with their emphasis on providing upgrade training to working adults. Seattle Central and Bellevue also had high rates of enrollment for BA holders in fall 1993. Grays Harbor and Spokane enrolled the lowest rate of BA enrollment at two percent. The variations between other colleges were relatively small.

Table III
Students with BA Degrees or Higher at Community Colleges
State Supported
Fall 1993

	Students with BA or Higher	% of Total Responding
1 Peninsula	228	10.8%
2 Grays Harbor	23	1.2%
3 Olympic	375	6.0%
4 Skagit Valley	259	5.0%
5 Everett	278	4.6%
6 District		
Seattle Central	950	12.9%
Seattle North	1,120	16.9%
Seattle South	476	10.3%
Seattle Voc Institute	28	10.0%
7 Shoreline	595	8.7%
8 Bellevue	1,281	14.6%
9 Highline	394	5.6%
10 Green River	321	4.6%
11 Pierce	266	4.3%
12 Centralia	110	4.1%
13 Lower Columbia	100	3.1%
14 Clark	526	6.0%
15 Wenatchee Valley	128	4.5%
16 Yakima Valley	173	3.4%
17 District		
Spokane	94	1.9%
Spokane Falls	230	2.8%
18 Big Bend	77	4.4%
19 Columbia Basin	292	5.1%
20 Walla Walla	90	3.8%
21 Whatcom	135	6.3%
22 Tacoma	275	5.7%
23 Edmonds	700	9.9%
24 South Puget Sound	255	5.8%

Source: SBCTC SMIS Database, Data Express Procedure SR93-42STE.